

# The Strange White Man 34

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Carpenter decided to stay in this little town and gave Holly the option to remain or return home. She was a tad bored as this town had not yet experienced the growth spurt that their town had, it was small, dusty and dry and had very few distractions. "How will I get home?" she questioned Carpenter. "By train of course." "Where will you stay if I take the train?" "Brother Sebastian will provide temporary lodging for me." "Do you trust him?" "Yes." "Why?" Carpenter did not explain to Holly that the monk was one of them, this was done at his request. He simply told her to take the train home and then send it back. She however was anxious about leaving Carpenter alone in this dustbowl of a town and the worry was etched on her pretty face. Carpenter sought to make her relax. "If you like you can visit the territorial capital and spend time there where you can go shopping and house hunting. You know how to contact Texas Jack for transport or you can have Marcus do it during the daylight hours." "Promise me that if anything happens you will contact me," she said as she took Carpenter in her arms. "I promise." The railway office was contacted and instructions were issued along with a bag full of gold and the following evening his private car was connected to the next train heading North. Later that evening Carpenter stood on the small rail platform and kissed Holly good bye and watched her enter his private car. He stood watching the train pull away until Brother Sebastian appeared at his side. He followed him to the university for a tour and then the monastery. It was an old place but it good repair and was the story of how it had been willed to the order by the former owner who had it built to reflect the building styles he had seen while visiting Europe in his youth. A small windowless room had been set aside for him in the monastery until his private car returned and the Brothers had strict orders not to disturb their new guest for any reason. At night they spent many hours talking about their past lives and what they learned during them and reading all the notes in the journals he had pilfered from Dr Vincent's room. Carpenter asked many questions of the monk. "So why do some of our kind go shrieking at the sign of the cross and if it touches them it burns them?" Carpenter queried one evening when Brother Sebastian set down his reading glasses. "That may be never understood. I have a few opinions on it that are hard to believe. One is that the newly risen vampire remembers that it died and now finds themselves awaking in their coffin. Their only thought is that they have been cursed and are evil and evil has always shied away from the sign of God and anything that represents him." "Interesting," Carpenter said as he lit a cigar. "I also believe that those that awaken in their coffin now face the long and arduous task of digging themselves out of a six foot hole packed with dirt and emerge a little crazed with hunger and that could attribute to their actions."

"Yes, that makes sense." "Another belief that I subscribe to is that every hundred years or so the strain that makes us what we are weakens and those of that kept our sanity and intellect are no longer repelled by religious artifacts or all the other flowers and charms that would send our predecessors screaming in terror. Now those that encountered one of the true decedents of Count Dracula or Dracula himself will never be anything other than evil as he was evil incarnate so his strain is more virulent." "So the person that made me has been around longer than I have?" "Quite. Reports of vampires have been around since the 1300's and possibly longer. We may never truly know as reports from that time were crude and unless stored properly have long crumbled into dust." "Again, that makes sense." "My belief as I said before was that someone was there on the day of your and my rebirth just as you did with your fiancée. It reawakened our human side and that I believe is the most believable explanation." That statement gave Carpenter much food for thought and was silent as he pondered all that the monk had told him. Brother Sebastian smiled as he picked up his reading glasses and returned to the entries he was attempting to decipher. Meanwhile the train bearing Carpenter's private car and Miss Holly arrived back in Springwood and was parked on a siding. Just after sunset Marcus arrived in a buggy to collect Holly and her luggage and transport them back to the ranch house. Before she departed she gave instructions and more money to ensure the private car would be returned as soon as possible. Holly was happy to be home. She first lit a fire and then filled a few large kettles with water and placed them on the hearth before she carried more buckets of water to fill the bathtub. She still marveled at her strength and stamina as she effortlessly carried full wooden buckets of water, two in each hand with ease. Afterwards she dressed and saddled a horse and rode into town to see her friends and hear the latest gossip. Less than two hundred miles from Springwood was another town similar in every way to Springwood named Sinking Wells. A lone rider leading a pack mule slowly plodded into town and made straight for the livery stable. Money was paid so the horse would be bedded and fed. Then a generous tip was given to one of the stable hands to lead the mule to the hotel so he could unpack it and then return it to the stable. The desk clerk sprang to greet this new arrival and slid the registration book for him to sign. "I need directions to the bathhouse and the barber shop," the stranger stated as he signed the ledger. "Just go out our front doors and make a left. You can't miss the place." "Can I get my things carried up to my room?" "I will see to it personally. Will you be staying in town long, Mister Stiles is it?" reading the name the stranger had scrawled. "Just call me Stiles and yes I will be staying for quite a spell."